

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH—REV. ROBERT L. SCHENCK, D.MIN.**

The Reverend Dr. Robert Lenard Schenck is an ordained evangelical minister of 40 years and the former lead missionary for Faith and Action in Nation's Capital, a religious organization active on Capitol Hill between 1995 and 2018. Since 2015, he has been the founding president of The Dietrich (Dee'-trick) Bonhoeffer (Bohn'-hawfer) Institute in Washington, DC, named after the renowned World War-II era German theologian and Nazi resister who worked to protect the German Evangelical church from Nazi co-optation before he was executed at the Flossenbug concentration camp in the waning days of the war.

Dr. Schenck holds degrees in Bible and Theology, Religion, Christian Ministry, and Strategic Leadership with a concentration in the theology of church and state. He has been a pastor, seminary instructor, denominational official, and evangelist, preaching in over 1000 pulpits across the United States and several other countries. In 2006, Dr. Schenck helped lead a historic dialogue between American evangelical church representatives and Moroccan Islamic leaders. In addition, was the first chaplain to serve the Capitol Hill Executive Service Club; in that capacity, he often delivered the invitational prayer at the U.S. Capitol Police Officer of the Year Awards Ceremony.

Before arriving in Washington, DC, Dr. Schenck had been a national leader in the anti-abortion movement aimed at toppling Roe v. Wade. He was arrested several times for blockading clinics and was the subject of numerous federal injunctions restricting his protest activity. After he relocated to Washington, DC, in 1994, Dr. Schenck shifted his strategy to privately persuading elected and appointed officials to embrace a strongly conservative social policy agenda. He also organized public events such as the annual National Memorial for the Pre-born and their Mothers and Fathers, presentations of Ten Commandments plaques to public officials, staging a Live Christmas Nativity at the U.S. Capitol, and holding prayer meetings, Bible studies, church services, and news conferences outside the White House, inside Congressional hearing rooms, and on the plaza of the Supreme Court.

Dr. Schenck's most ambitious undertaking was Operation Higher Court. It involved recruiting, orientating, and deploying wealthy volunteer couples paired with sympathetic Supreme Court justices and their spouses to bolster, encourage, and applaud the justices' conservative opinions. Then, beginning ten years ago, Dr. Schenck started questioning his religious community's positions on guns, abortion, same-sex marriage, and religious liberty, among others. He eventually broke with orthodoxy and became a dissenting voice among his culturally and theologically conservative peers. In 2018 he closed down Operation Higher Court and its parent organization, Faith and Action. Today Dr. Schenck advocates for an empathetic, humane, and reality-based approach to complex moral problems and personal crises, respecting the dignity, autonomy, and moral agency of the individuals involved.

Dr. Schenck lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife of 45 years, Cheryl E. Schenck, a retired school-based occupational therapist and, for the last twelve years, a psychotherapist in private practice. The Schencks have two adult children and a much-loved son-in-law and are thoroughly enjoying the hugs of their first grandchild.

